Interview with W. Averell Harriman

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

UNDER SECRETARY W. AVERELL HARRIMAN

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Q: To begin with, let's just identify you, sir. You are Governor Averell Harriman and your list of offices held is quite lengthy. But during the Johnson Administration you served as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs; as Ambassador at Large; and, for the last year of the Johnson Administration, you were chief negotiator at the Paris peace talks concerning North Vietnam.

HARRIMAN: That's right.

Q: When did your close acquaintance with Lyndon Johnson begin?

HARRIMAN: I don't know when it began. I think I first met him when he was congressman during the Roosevelt Administration but I don't recall. But, of course, I knew him well when he was a senator, when he was majority leader, and I had some talks with him during the '50's, during the period he was majority leader. I took a good deal of interest in the Democratic party because I was a member of the Advisory Council to the National Committee. The two leaders in the Senate and the House, both Senator Johnson and Congressman Rayburn, didn't think much of the committee, didn't support it. Some of the

other senators did join, I've forgotten which ones. I could find out who they were; it's in the record.

Q: Yes.

HARRIMAN: I remember Adali Stevenson was a member, and I remember Senator Symington and Senator Kennedy were members. I've forgotten who else they were. We used to meet regularly and discuss matters of concern to the Democratic party. Both Senator Johnson and Congressman Rayburn felt that they were the leaders of the party and that this was in some conflict with them. I didn't agree with that. We were always very friendly about it. The subjects which we discussed were not subjects that were necessarily before the Congress, since there were many issues we felt should be developed that were not before Congress as a platform for the Democratic party in '56 and again in '60. Most of the time I was governor of New York—a considerable part of the time I was. Then afterwards I still remained as a member because we were very much concerned with the election of a Democratic president.

But, in any event, I think the records of that committee are available, and I don't think that there's anything I can contribute to it. But if there are any specific questions in the minds of anyone about the work of that committee—I thought it was an effective committee. It issued statements of the position of the Democratic party on different subjects. We had some very blunt and heated talks—there were differences of opinion on a number of points which I felt were quite important at the time. I gave it a considerable amount of time, not only at the meetings, but in preparing for the meetings and going over positions on different subjects.

Q: Many of Mr. Johnson's critics when he was President have made the point that he wasn't interested in his earlier career in foreign affairs at all. While you served President Truman, either in the White House or as Mutual Security Administrator, did Mr. Johnson

ever take any interest in the foreign affairs side? Did he ever come by and talk to you about it?

HARRIMAN: I don't recall any great close contact with President Johnson during that period. I dealt largely with the foreign relations committees in the Senate—and of course he was not a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, so I don't recall any particular talks.

He used to come to breakfast occasionally, I used to see him. I remember he reminded me of that. He had an extraordinarily good memory. He reminded me of some of the breakfasts we used to have when I had the house on Foxhall Road, some of the members of the Senate used to come. He used to say, 'Why don't you do that now? Why don't you get hold of the senators and give them the kind of information you used to give us?"—when he was senator. But I don't particularly recall any aspect of the then-problems that I had to deal with him. I always thought of him as a very loyal supporter of President Truman in the positions that he took. Naturally the people that would be most in my mind were those that took an adverse position.

Of course in the earlier days, 1948, we used to see a great deal of Senator Vandenberg, who was then Republican majority chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate. He played an important role in helping President Truman get the Marshall Plan legislation through—then eventually the NATO. Those talks I remember rather well.

I remember President Johnson very well as an active supporter on the Hill of the basic Democratic party principles, a very close supporter as I recall, in every aspect of business I had anything to do with, of President Truman during that very critical period.

Q: What about when he became Vice President? Was he close to the foreign policy discussions of the early Kennedy years, 1961?

HARRIMAN: I did not have a great deal of contact with him at that time. I was very strongly for his selection as Vice President. I remember going on the floor of the convention in Los Angeles, [and] making a statement to the press that this showed the wisdom of our new President in selecting the best possible representative, best possible man to be his vice presidential candidate. You may remember at the time there were certain of the so-called liberals who objected to it, and I made a very strong statement to the press on the radio at the time.

Q: I recall that.

HARRIMAN: I remember a good congressman friend from New Orleans spoke to me about it, having heard it on the radio—

Q: Carl Albert?

HARRIMAN: No, no, of New Orleans—Hale Boggs—a major congressman from New Orleans. I knew him intimately. Anyway he spoke to me about the statement because he was, of course, a strong supporter of President Johnson. I did have a talk during the campaign with—not a very intimate talk—he wanted to get some support in New York State, and I told him New York State was committed to Kennedy. He got a very few votes, two or three votes, from the New York delegation for the presidency. He had a very loyal supporter in the man who became our national committeeman Johnson Ed Weisl.

Q: You were Assistant Secretary of State, I believe, when he made his first trip to Vietnam. Did you talk to him about that at the time?

HARRIMAN: I don't recall talking to him about it. I remember he went. I don't recall talking to him about it. I may have been on a trip, but I don't recall speaking to him about it before he went.

I remember the most important thing that happened—the most publicly important thing that happened on that trip—was his bringing the camel driver to the United States, which I thought was a very fine move of public relations in terms of the Pakistanis, as well as the United States. But I remember he had a talk with President Diem and I remember reading copy about it. But I don't remember having any particular talks at that time.

The most intimate relationships that I had with the President, when he became President, related to the peace efforts he made. He sent me on a trip in December 1965 to a number of countries. It was just before New Year's and I remember very well his calling me on the telephone and he said, 'Averell, have you got your bags packed?"

I said, 'Well, it's always packed, Mr. President."

He said, "Bob McNamara is here with me. He's got an airplane waiting for you to take you to Europe."

I said, 'Where do you want me to go?"

He said, "That's for you to decide."

Then he explained what he wanted to do. He said he was going to continue the Christmas pause in bombing the North for a period, and he wanted to get support for his peace move. He wanted to get peace negotiations started, and I left that evening at 8:00 o'clock, as I recall it. I had no instructions, of course, except the general instructions which he gave me.

I went to Poland. I had a number of extremely interesting talks. I went to Poland first, Warsaw. I arrived there—that was about 3:00 o'clock by my watch, 9:00 o'clock in the morning by the local time. I was met by the ambassador and he said that the Foreign Minister was ready to see me in an hour. I asked him to put it off for an hour and a half so I could get shaved and breakfast. But I've got a memorandum of my talk on April 19 with Michalowski, which relates to some of the steps which the Polish government took.

Q: They sent Michalowski to Hanoi after your talk with them, did they not?

HARRIMAN: Yes, while I was there, Michalowski went to Hanoi. This memorandum not only covers that, but also covers later attempts which the Polish government made at that time. I don't know whether we gave this copy of the memorandum of the conversation that I had with Mr. Michalowski, who is now the Polish Ambassador to the United States, on February 19th of this year which you may or may not have. I don't know if your files have got it.

Q: They may not have, if you have a copy that you can give to us.

HARRIMAN: I will be glad to give it to you because it covers the discussion that I had with him about certain talks which they carried on subsequently-which might be useful to complete the-

Q: We'd be very happy to attach it to this.

HARRIMAN: We have a copy of this, haven't we, Mark?

(Mark): Yes.

HARRIMAN: Although my arrival was not heralded, I spent 24 hours there. I spentall day most of the time, with Polish officials.

Q: You talked to Rapacki?

HARRIMAN: I talked to Rapacki, I had several talks with him and I saw Mr. Gomulka. I think there's a record of that in my report of those talks. They took it seriously. They took the President's position seriously—possibly because I knew the Poles over the years, and gave them my assurance that the President was serious in this move. I don't know that they would have taken it from many people without some notification from the President. But, after all, my position with different people around the world had been such for so

many years that they accepted statements that I made without any statement from the government.

But I didn't know whether they would receive me. They had only heard the night before that I was coming. As a matter of fact they had only heard that morning because I had left so hurriedly. I didn't know until an hour or two before I landed, a couple of hours before I landed, that they were going to see me. So on the basis of that rather hurried information, it is quite remarkable the Polish government sent their foreign ministry official to Hanoi, and he stayed there two weeks and he did what he could.

This memorandum shows his account, as he described it to me three years later, of his visit. There's some information in this which I did not have before, such as that the Soviet government encouraged the trip, the Chinese government discouraged it. But the government in Hanoi was not ready to negotiate at that time and Michalowski felt that if we'd held the pause for a little longer period they might have come around.

Q: He still believes that in 1969?

HARRIMAN: He still believes that in '69, but I don't. I have my doubts about it. I don't subscribe to that. I thought the President held the halt as long as he could and should at that time. I didn't know how long he was going to hold the pause, and I was anxious for—. I didn't know that Michalowski had gone, but the Poles said they would take some action. I knew others were trying to take some action and I was anxious to give them enough time. I think the President gave ample time by this pause, 37 days in all, but it was—I've forgotten exactly how many days it was after I went to Warsaw. It must have been nearly a month, nearly four weeks.

Q: Yes, it was nearly the end of January.

HARRIMAN: I thought he ought to give them at least three weeks, and he gave them four weeks. So that I think Hanoi had every opportunity to accept the President's offer. This

trip of Michalowski was evidence of very real interest on the part of the Poles. And Mr. Shelepin, the Russian, went there, but how much he did at that time I don't know.

Q: Went to Hanoi, or came to Warsaw?

HARRIMAN: He went to Hanoi. He was on a trip to Hanoi. He was one of the senior members of the Communist party secretariat. He went to Hanoi for what purpose I don't know, but he was going there regardless of this visit.

I did not go to Moscow on this trip because I thought it would be embarrassing to the Russian leaders. I had talked about the war in Vietnam with Mr. Kosygin the year before. I had seen him in July—not the year before, some months before—July of 1965, six months earlier. And he had indicated that they wanted to see the war finished and thought that Hanoi would be willing to discuss a peaceful settlement. I reported that to the President and I am sure those documents are in the file. I'll look it up and see what I've got. If I have anything further I'll be glad to give it to you. But I did not go to Moscow because I thought there was a difference of opinion between Peking and Moscow about ending the war with Peking desiring to see the war continue, to see us continue to be involved in it, and Moscow wanting the war to stop—each for their own ends.

But I went on, of course, and saw a number of other countries. We might stop this a minute and let's find out what we have in the files on this. I reported my talks briefly to the President and the Secretary of State. Those telegrams will undoubtedly be in the files. If they are not—there were several from Warsaw I see here. I, as always, repeated very briefly the substance. I think there are three reports here.

Then I went on to Tito, whom I had known very well over the years. I first knew him during the war. Then I went to see him in '51 when he was in great trouble. I went there for President Truman to talk with him about his military needs. He thought at that time that Stalin was going to unleash his satellites and he wanted some additional planes and tanks and other equipment. I think we did something for him at that time. So I had a rather long

experience with him. He was very anxious to do what he could. He said his influence with Peking was zero! In fact, he maintained that Peking was reserving for him the most vicious attacks.

I remember him saying this rather amusing story—I'm not sure I put it in the telegram—but he said that they had just called him a “Revisionist Bandit”. I suggested that wasn't anything very much, because they had called us “Imperialist Bandits” for years, and he said, “Oh but you don't understand. A revisionist bandit is a far worse character than an imperialist!” This was the kind of personal talks that we had.

But he did say that he, of course, had influence in Moscow and would be very anxious to end the war, to see the war ended, because he thought his security was at stake. He was afraid, of course, that there would be a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States and that would affect his security. That was true of all these Eastern European countries that I talked to at different times. They were very anxious to end the war. In his case the Yugoslavs were not giving any substantial military assistance, I think they only sent a few hundred thousand dollars worth of medical equipment. It was rather silly for us to put Yugoslavia on the same list as those who were helping the North Vietnamese. I think, that's all they sent. Their Crescent Society, so-called, paralleling our Red Cross in their opinion, had sent this equipment, these medical supplies. But, in any event, he did call in the ambassador, the Russian ambassador, the same afternoon that I saw him. What message he sent to Moscow, I don't know.

I went on and saw a number of different people. He recommended I talk to Nasser. He and Nasser considered themselves quite close, being so-called neutrals. And I'm rather interested that Gromyko now is on his way to see Tito, having just returned from a visit to see Nasser in Cairo. It may well be he went to talk to Nasser about a settlement of the conflict between the Arabs and Israel, and it may be that's why he's going there. It's particularly interesting that he should be going to Belgrade at this time when certainly the Communist party and Russia must be quite angry with Tito for not permitting the

Yugoslav Communist party to go to their meeting, which is coming to a close in Moscow now. There were several communist countries that didn't go. I think the only three of them that I remember are, of course, the Chinese communists, the Albanians, and Tito. I don't remember which other ones.

Q: The Romanians threatened not to go, but then went.

HARRIMAN: But they did. The Romanians have gone, and what's interesting about that conference is it's not going too well for the Russians—not much unity. The Italians have made a major issue of the Soviet interference in Czechoslovakia, spoke very vigorously against this Brezhnev doctrine of interference with the sovereignty of another state. Of course, the French Communists are opposing it. I don't know what position they're taking. But it's interesting that the Soviet Union is going ahead with its business with the Yugoslav government, in spite of the difference, a very strong difference. I can't help but think that he's reporting to Tito about his talks with Nasser.

But anyway Tito recommended that I go to see Nasser, and I did on the same trip and had a very interesting talk with Nasser and he did take up with the Soviet government, I'm sure, the desirability of their influencing the Hanoi government to undertake talks about peaceful settlement. I urged him to approach other neutrals.

I also saw on this same trip Mr. Shastri, the Prime Minister of India, and President Ayub of Pakistan, and both of them agreed to talk to Mr. Kosygin at Tashkent. As a matter of fact, President Ayub left almost immediately after talking to me to go to Tashkent. That was the meeting which was called by Kosygin to bring pressure on both the Indians and the Pakistanis to end their war. We supported that initiative. I'm sure both Mr. Shastri and President Ayub did speak to Kosygin. Of course, Mr. Shastri died, so I never had any report of it, but President Ayub, whom I've seen subsequently, said that they did with Kosygin, although he was very angry with the United States for having starting the bombing while he was in Hanoi. He has never quite gotten over that. He felt it was

a personal affront. Obviously it was not, but he felt that it was, and it's one of those unarguable questions that you can't argue with him. But I'm inclined to believe that he did give some sort of instructions to Shelepin to see what they could do to encourage Hanoi, but obviously they are not ready to exert any major influence.

I'd like to say a little more about the Russian attitude towards Hanoi. After my talk with Mr. Kosygin in July, 1965, I became convinced that they, the Russians, wanted to see the war ended. I had a very rough talk with Kosygin. He was not at all in a generally friendly point of view, because he had a number of things that he was annoyed about. The principal one was Vietnam. He kept saying, “Don't you realize that this war only helps the Chinese?” It became evident to me that what they wanted in Southeast Asia, which has subsequently developed in the subcontinent of India-Pakistan, they want to see Southeast Asia strong enough and independent enough to resist Peking's expansion to the South.

Now, there are certain people who have felt that the Russians would want to see us bogged down—occupied—to give them a freer hand in other parts of the world, and also they would like to see the Chinese diverted to the South rather than to the North, just as Chamberlain tried to divert Hitler to the East to Russia, rather than to the West. And I'm very much annoyed with these people who argue this way because they are very stupid. Some of them are experts in the State Department—not the foreign service. Let me put you straight, not foreign service, but experts who felt they knew more about this. They thought the Russians ought to, if they knew more about this. They thought the Russians ought to, if they had any intelligence, direct Peaking South. It just so happens that the Russians don't believe that. Now I can't tell you why they don't believe it, but they don't.

If we want any greater evidence it is their action in India-Pakistan. They are giving both India and Pakistan assistance. Actually they are giving them both military assistance, which we have largely dropped out of. You know we have stopped giving both India and Pakistan much military assistance, although we're giving both economic assistance. They

are doing both economic and military. They want to divert Pakistan from its closer relations with Peking and this is the way they feel.

Now other evidence is that the Soviet Union helped us both during October to create conditions which made it possible for President Johnson to stop the bombing in North Vietnam as he did in November 1968, and then again in January helped us end this rather ridiculous undignified discussion on the shape of the table. They brought heat to bear on the Hanoi delegation to stop that nonsense and to agree upon a compromise. Actually it wasn't a compromise. It practically accepted one of the suggestions that had been made from Saigon, so Saigon couldn't refuse. But in any event this is direct evidence.

But they, and I think it's important to understand, will only go so far. I used to talk to the Secretary of State about this, and he said, “Well, if the Russians really want to help end the conflict, all they have to do is stop giving weapons to Hanoi.” I think we've got to recognize the Russians, so stated by Mr. Kosygin, look upon North Vietnam as what he calls a “Sister Socialist State.” It is their obligation as the great leader of the communist movement, it's their obligation to support North Vietnam just as we considered it our obligation to support South Vietnam.

In the second place, they have a limited influence. The North Vietnamese are fiercely nationalistic. They don't want to be dominated by Peking or by Moscow, and the influence of each of them is relative. I don't know which has the most influence, but the Russians evidently have some influence and were ready to use it to start negotiations to end the war.

They believe their interests are better advanced by ending the war in Vietnam. I don't care who has different opinion, I'm satisfied that this is true. So I'm satisfied that Mr. Kosygin did something. But, in any event, there is the combination of Mr. Michalowski's visit, of which we have the detailed account of his visit and a detailed statement there that the Russians encouraged him. And the interesting part was—the first time we knew it—the

Chinese argued against it, were quite violently opposed to it. That is an indication that our guesses about the position of both countries were true. But in any event, we don't know what Shelepin said or did. He didn't go into any—and Mr. Michalowski doesn't know either.

Now in addition I stopped in Tehran to see the Shah, partly as a gesture of good will. I had known him very well. I had known him since the wartime days. I met him first in 1942 when I went to Tehran with Prime Minister Churchill and went up to Moscow at that time. I have seen him intimately. He's stayed in my house in Sun Valley and he's come to dinner and that kind of thing. I thought if I flew over without talking to him, it would be misunderstood. So I visited his country just to consult him, and I think he was pleased that we were doing it. But I didn't think anything particularly would come of that.

I find that I reported my talks with Mr. Shastri by telegram. I reported also my visit, rather brief, to Pakistan. Also, I reported on my talk with—as a matter of fact the report of my talk with President Ayub came from Tehran because I left almost immediately after that talk. Then there's another report of my talk, which is undoubtedly in the files, with the Shah of Tehran.

And I had this rather interesting talk—Ambassador Battle went with me to talk to Nasser at his home and my only instructions related to the Fourteen points, which was about all I had to go on. We had taken a position stating our attitude in the Fourteen points. I had those with me and I could use them wherever need be. Nasser—naturally everyone was rather flattered that the President should send a special emissary to see him, and he indicated that he would do what he could, but there wasn't very much which I thought he could do. On the other hand, one of the principal reasons for going was that Tito had suggested that it might be worthwhile since Nasser had certain contacts with Peking whereas he, Tito, had none.

I notice in this report that the Foreign Minister this morning said that they would talk to the representatives in Hanoi and later to the Chinese—Peking. Nevertheless I don't think any of these talks with Peking had any influence. Did I make any other calls on that trip, Mark?

(Mark): Bangkok and Tokyo. There's also a tab from Manila. You met Rusk coming around in Manila.

HARRIMAN: Oh yes, that's true. I went back and I went on to Bangkok. I saw Martin and I saw Sullivan there. I didn't go to Laos on that trip?

(Mark): Yes, Bangkok, Tokyo, Canberra, Laos, Saigon and Manila.

HARRIMAN: I must have gone to Bangkok and then Vientiane and then to Tokyo and then to Australia. Then I came back because the Secretary asked me to meet him.

Q: You met him in Manila.

HARRIMAN: No, I met him at Bangkok, I think. I went back to Bangkok to meet the Secretary because he asked me to come back that way to pick him up and take him after the funeral of Shastri who had died in Tashkent. I think while I was waiting for him as a matter of fact, I went back to Bangkok and then went to Vientiane but I did not go to Saigon on that trip, did I?

(Mark): Yes, you came back to Bangkok and then went to Saigon—then Manila, then home via Honolulu.

HARRIMAN: Then I made the second trip with Vice President Humphrey. When did I leave? That was another trip? So the trip with Vice President Humphrey was at the President's request and we covered a number of countries in Asia. Did I leave again from Washington?

(Mark) Yes.

HARRIMAN: I remember Senator John Cooper was along. I've forgotten who else. We made a number of stops. The President asked me to make sure that the leader understood his policies in each one of these countries, and he wanted to make sure that the Vice President was fully briefed.

The Vice President did a very good job in those countries. I remember his speech in Canberra in which Prime Minister Holt was present. This was a largish lunch of a cross section of opinion forming people in Canberra. Mr. Holt said to me as the Vice president finished—he talked for half an hour. It's rather well known that the Vice President doesn't always have a terminus, but in this case he had exactly a half-hour on the radio. He was told when to break off so he only talked for half an hour. Holt said, “This was the best presentation of an issue made by any visitor to Australia in my experience.” He supported, of course, the President's position. And he did a great job. Vice President Humphrey, when he limited his speeches, was an extremely effective speaker. His problem was that he usually made three speeches at one time and he lost some of the effect because—I'll speaking of his domestic speeches. But he made a very good impression everywhere he went. Did we go to Wellington, or didn't we, on that trip?

(Mark): I don't remember.

HARRIMAN: Anyway, that was the trip in which Bobby Kennedy came out for the coalition government and Vice President Humphrey made his now-famous remark, “That would be letting the fox into the chicken coop.” I think that must have been in Canberra, at the press conference. (I thought it was Wellington), if he didn't go to Wellington that trip. You don't recall?(Note: It was Wellington)

(Mark): I don't.

Q: When did President Johnson give you sort of the general commission to lead the peace initiatives?

HARRIMAN: Where's that memorandum I wanted? The first mission that he gave me is this one that I speak of at the end of—it was really Christmas week. He called me at noon and I was off at 8:00 o'clock that evening. The only instructions that I had—the information that I had—were the 14 Points which I used to good advantage.

I've got a little memorandum here of my talk with him in Manila in October '66—that same year—and this was rather typical. I'll give you a copy because I'm sure you haven't got it. These were my notes of “No Distribution” of my personal talk with the President. He asked me to return and visit a number of countries, which I'll speak about in a little while, to describe what had happened in Manila. I asked the President what he wanted me to emphasize to the heads of governments that I saw. He replied, “You know what I want, peace. And you can quote me in any way that you think would be helpful. I will support anything you say.”

Q: That's about as broad a commission as you can hold.

HARRIMAN: He said, “Has any President ever given you more sweeping authority than that?” And I replied, “No.” I told the President I thought the Manila conference had been extraordinarily valuable even though the effect would not necessarily be felt for months. This is a little personal touch which you might want.

I remember on several occasions I would ask him that question and he would say, 'Averell, you know better than I do, go ahead and talk to them. Tell them. You know what I want.” This was the attitude of President Roosevelt on a number of different occasions, without any instructions, and I have been used to doing it. But I always had a feeling that President Roosevelt gave me this authority and if I did all right, I'd be all right; if I did something which he didn't like, I would be out on a limb and the branch would be sawed off. But

with President Johnson I knew exactly that he meant this, what he said. I had a complete feeling of confidence that he meant exactly what he said. Of course in each one of these cases he knew that I was familiar with the subject. He wasn't giving me a wild blank check because he knew that I was thoroughly informed. A most interesting case was one that he sent me a few days after the Dominican—

Q: April of 1965 when you went to various Latin American countries?

HARRIMAN: Yes. This was an extraordinary trip. I reported. I think I've got nothing more.

Q: You went in May, it was probably before you left.

HARRIMAN: I arrived in Bogota, the first stop, on May 1, so it must have been on April 30.

(Mark): This is the report, a summary.

HARRIMAN I did not make a report on this. I've got a very detailed report of a trip I made after Manila, after this trip. Perhaps I'd better cover the Manila first.

Q: All right, sir.

HARRIMAN: I submitted this to the President and I assume you have a copy of this?

Q: If it went to him, yes sir. There should be one in his files.

HARRIMAN: But this is a copy dated November 28 for the President and the Secretary of State and it has an account of each one of the visits I made at the end of November, right after Manila. It has a summary report and then it has a memorandum which is entitled, “Matters of particular interest to each country.” in which I have a detailed statement of what I saw in each country as it related to the countries themselves as well as to the Manila trip.

I felt a great need of haste on that trip because it was only important if I saw the head of government immediately. And I remember one very extraordinary day on which I

had already stopped at Indonesia and I had seen the three principal members of that government, I stopped at Ceylon, and that was an interesting visit because not very many people visit Ceylon, and I'm glad I did because Ceylon is quite an influential Buddhist state, and they had been attempting to work with the Saigon government and with the Thai government to improve their relations and it was quite interesting. And I went to New Delhi and I saw Mrs. Gandhi and I spent the night. I remember having breakfast with Ambassador Bowles. Then I saw President Ayub, had lunch with him. I had to go to Peshawar and take a separate plane to go down to Rawalpindi. Then on to Tehran. I had tea with the Shah and I arrived in Rome just in time for a live 11:00 o'clock broadcast on television.

Q: That was some day!

HARRIMAN: That was one of the fullest days that I've had. But I felt it was very important. I was in a particular hurry on that trip because I thought if I went quickly to places it was important. I saw of course the Italian representatives, the Italian government. I remember one untoward incident was the ambassador. After Italy I went to France and I talked to the NATO Council there. I saw Couve de Murville. I didn't see De Gaulle on the visit. I went to Bonn. I went to London. I saw, of course, both Prime Minister Wilson and Brown.

Then I went to Morocco at the request of Ambassador Tasca. That was an unfortunate visit from my standpoint because Bourguiba was particularly furious that I hadn't gone to see him, so I had to make a special trip a few weeks later, on which I went to Tunisia, Algeria and Spain on that next trip. But it was a good thing because the King, whom I had known for some time—as a matter of fact I had met him as a little boy at Casablanca Conference when President Roosevelt saw the King. They have a very warm feeling toward the United States in general, particularly President Roosevelt, because President Roosevelt took a very strong position that Morocco should have its independence, and they gave him credit for it. Unfortunately, we've had difficulties with some of our relations with Morocco because we promised—I think President Johnson promised a very moderate

amount of perhaps 12 million dollars worth of military equipment—to sell them that. And there was some difficulty with the delivery and some second thinking about it. So it was a useful trip for that reason.

Q: Did any of the visits on that trip result in any initiatives toward negotiations with Hanoi?

HARRIMAN: No. The purpose of this trip was quite a different purpose. As you'll see from this little memorandum I'll give you, the purpose of the trip was to inform them about the Manila Conference; to inform them of the efforts the President was making for peaceful settlement; to get support for the President's initiative for peace. And I didn't ask them to take any immediate steps. In this memorandum about this trip I emphasized the fact that the President sat at a round table with six Asian leaders as equals, which impressed them; the favorable military developments of South Vietnam; the limited objective that the President had of letting the people of South Vietnam decide their own future. I won't go into it all, but these were all matters which they were interested in—the constitutional procedures which had been established. It was more a general effort to get a more sympathetic attitude towards what we were doing among these countries than it was to ask them to do anything particular for peace. I expressed the President's willingness to stop the bombing if there was reciprocal action taken by Hanoi, and in some places I was very frank. I told Mr. Couve de Murville that what President De Gaulle had done at Phnom Penh was counter productive. I had known Murville for many years, and there was no problem about being particularly blunt about it.

Q: I believe the Poles were in the middle of a new peace initiative right about that time. Were you involved in that one?

HARRIMAN: Oh yes, that was the so-called Marigold, covered by this memorandum. I wasn't talking at this time about these different peace initiatives. There were a number of them that were constantly keeping us busy. That was a peace initiative which started

with Ambassador Lodge talking with the Italian Ambassador and bringing in the Polish representative.

Unfortunately, the middle of these talks—I don't think I have to supplement what was said here about how the talks broke down. I've always been satisfied that the Poles were acting in good faith. But they never had a firm commitment from Hanoi to start negotiations. But they were trying to act in good faith as middle men between getting two recalcitrant people—I won't say recalcitrant—two people together who were at loggerheads. And they weren't successful in doing it. Unfortunately, the bombing of Hanoi came in at that time—which was just bad luck, no connection between the two.

Now I think I might say something about the Dominican visit, because I thought that was quite a useful trip. There again, the President sent me off with a minimum of notice—

Q: And minimum of instruction, too?

HARRIMAN: No instructions. As a matter of fact that trip developed as I went. I think I took one foreign service officer with me. I was to go first to Bogota, and then the trip developed from that. I had it rather rapid again, because unless I went quickly it didn't mean very much. They were all concerned over the Dominican—remember we landed our troops; first a small detachment, then a rather large detachment—and the facts were developing as I went along. I went to eight countries, and talked to heads of government of eight different Latin American countries, and was gone from Washington exactly seven days. So you can see it was rather hurried, particularly as I didn't have a special plane. I did use the attach#'s planes over a couple of legs of the journey but it was rather a hectic trip on commercial air flights.

I saw the press. I've always made it a rule never to talk on background but only to talk on the record. I think one of the great mistakes some people make is to try to talk with people in foreign countries for background. They don't understand it, number one; and number two; the Americans don't really abide by it because there is always someone they talk to

in confidence who leaks it out. So I talked to the press on arrival. Naturally the trips were heralded to some extent and the press and television and radio were always present on arrival and on departure. I answered questions, which were also on television. Since our position was actually changing from period to period—remember we first went in to save lives, and then we went in with a larger and larger group—so I took the position that our motives were to save lives and to end the fighting. They should wait until the last chapter was written, and then they would see all the President had in mind was to make it possible for the people of the Dominican Republic to express their own views without the tragedy of any more bloodshed.

Q: Do you think they understood that?

HARRIMAN: On the whole I had a pretty good press in spite of the fact that in a number of these countries they were quite shocked by the intervention, the move from the principle of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, which was really the end of landing Marines, was quite a shock in a number of countries. As I recall it, about half the countries were sympathetic and about half the countries were very much opposed. As I recall it, the President of Colombia was sympathetic. Of course Brazil was sympathetic. I spent two days in Brazil because I had to go from Rio to Brasilia. I saw the President there. Then also the President of Panama was sympathetic. I thought it was four, but I'm not sure. It was certainly at least three.

The other countries refused to say anything. Some of them were quite sympathetic to the President. The President of Chile was a good friend of the President's and he said that he could not take any public position, for his own political position—he was having a good deal of trouble at the time. There were demonstrations going on at that time. That was the only place I had any difficulty with demonstrations. But that was going on against him so he couldn't take any public position. The other presidents, I think, felt the same way about it. That whole record of the position of each country is well known, so I don'tthink there's any use going into it.

Q: No.

HARRIMAN: But it certainly did some good in that they felt somewhat better about the fact that the President sent his personal representative to explain the position. And it did some good in the press, because I didn't dodge any questions and I answered them. That was the most active, in fact, it was the most exhausting trip I made.

I think in all, during the four years from '64 to '68, until I got involved, I went to nearly 50 countries and some several times, pretty well divided between Latin America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In almost every case I saw the head of government and had some particular reason for President Johnson. That may not have been true about Africa because for one year, from March '64-'65 the President assigned me the job of looking after Africa. I was not much involved in Vietnamese affairs during that period, except as related to the question of peace.

Q: What about those initiatives for peace? You mentioned Marigold, I know there are a lot of other ones. Are there other ones that reached the stage of considerable importance?

HARRIMAN: Well, the most important one I think were the discussions in London—

Q: February '67?

HARRIMAN: I happened to be in Florida for a long weekend—one of the few times I was away and I'm sorry that I wasn't there. That was a very unfortunate period. It was bad luck. It was bad luck that Kosygin was in London just at the time of the four-day Tet cessation of bombing. There's no doubt that the North Vietnamese took most extraordinary advantage of that four-day stop in bombing. I think the Navy reported that it looked as if at 7 o'clock, whenever it was, a curtain went up and the flocks of small ships and large ships moved down. And then when it was over, the curtain came down. I remember one of the pilots, who was observing one of the routes of North Vietnam into Laos, said “This looks like the Jersey turnpike on a Sunday afternoons” There was tremendous pressure from our military

on the President. He did extend it, I've forgotten how many hours, whether it was a day or something, a little bit longer. But I've always thought it was very bad luck that Kosygin was in London at that time. If he had been there several weeks, or a couple weeks ahead of Tet, or a couple of weeks afterwards, and hadn't been tied to this Tet cessation, something might have come out of it, because Kosygin told Wilson that he was ready to do something to bring us together. I've always felt something would have come of that if it hadn't been tied to this Tet period.

Kosygin asked that it be extended, and there really wasn't time. We almost gave him an ultimatum—"you must have an answer within a period of time," which was quite impossible to get.

Now Wilson thought they were making progress. [Chester] Chet Cooper was in London at that time. He was my assistant working on this. He had a very close relationship with Wilson and with Brown, he had been there earlier before they were important dignitaries. I'm satisfied they were taking it very seriously, and there's every indication that Kosygin was trying to do something.

But I don't in any way suggest the President was wrong in not extending the Tet truce at that time—or the pause in bombing at that time—because the North Vietnamese were taking such fantastic advantage of it. It was almost impossible to stop the military from demanding they be continued. So, as I say, if it had been in a lull, possibly something might have come of this talk because there is no doubt Kosygin wanted to do something as later was shown in the telegrams that he sent the President. I think there's one in June of '68, in which he said something to the effect, "I and my colleagues have reason to believe. ." Therefore the talks which started between the Russians and Hanoi in January '66 evidently were continued, and although Moscow never took a very firm position of insisting that Hanoi should start negotiations, I'm satisfied that they did what they felt they could within the limits of their relationship with Hanoi and the influence that they could bear. But in any event I think that one in London was one of the most promising.

I had no patience for U Thant and some of his claims, in which he suggested that he told Stevenson that if certain things were done at a certain time, peace talks could start. It was quite a different thing to have some rather vague talks begin from having anything come of them. So I've very little patience for the criticisms that certain people made that opportunities were lost. I think the Marigold talk might have led to some talks in Warsaw between our representatives if it had not been for the unfortunate bombing of Hanoi, but whether they would have come to anything or not it's very hard to say. None of these various attempts—there was the one with the two Frenchmen which Henry Kissinger-

Q: Yes, in the summer of 1967—

HARRIMAN: President Johnson did everything—he gave every opportunity and I don't recall any of them in which I felt there was any loss except as I have suggested, the two—the closest—Marigold, and the talks with Wilson in London in February of '67?

Q: What about your own mission to the Romanians in late '67?

HARRIMAN: The Romanians were given every opportunity and they showed, as the Poles did, a real desire to do something. In fact, they did even more than the Poles because they sent—what was the name of that man, Macevesecau—their deputy foreign minister on two trips. One was the result of my visit to Romania in the—I think that was about the first of December, 1967. I stopped in to see them because I had understood that they were unhappy that I hadn't visited them before, had long talks with prime minister Maurer. As a result of that trip they sent their senior officer to Hanoi. He came back and reported to us here in Washington the result of his trip; made a second trip back, but nothing came of it. He did everything he could. They were remarkably accurate, I thought, in the reports of the conversations, because they told the bad news as well as the good. It was an indication of the good faith of the Romanian government in attempting to bring us together.

Q: Then it was the President's speech of March 31, that finally did get things started. It was not some other initiative?

HARRIMAN: No, it was entirely the President's initiative. I think a lot of these efforts began to bear fruit, because no doubt in January '66 when Michalowski went there, the North Vietnamese were unwilling to start negotiations. I think the March 31—I was rather surprised. I didn't think that this partial bombing halt would bring them to talks. I like to show the times I was wrong. People are very apt to remember only the times they were right. But if I had to bet—no one asked me to bet—but if I had been asked to bet whether there would be a favorable response to the March 31 speech I would have said the reply would be negative. It might lead to something else, but they wouldn't start talking. At least on even money I would have bet against it. But it did start the talks. You know what happened from the full record of those talks. The most minute of details are in the records.

Q: When did the President tell you that he wanted you to be his representative for the talks, and how did he instruct you for that?

HARRIMAN: I think that Rusk told me first. Of course, in those negotiations we had the most detailed instructions. Every statement we made in the public meetings—we drafted them in Paris, sent them to Washington, and got them approved. We did have a number of private talks, in which we had general instructions rather than detailed instructions. Those went on—the first ones were with Cy Vance and Colonel Lao, and the later ones with both of us together with Mr. Habib, who is an extremely capable foreign service officer, assigned to us, who had served in Saigon. The three of us met with Le Duc Tho, when he was there, and if he wasn't there, met with Xuan Thuy, who was the head of the mission.

And those talks, we got to know a good deal of the North Vietnamese thinking on a number of subjects, but not in regard to the political settlement because we did not want to discuss any details of any political settlement without the Saigon government present. I'd always hoped that the Saigon government and the NLF would get together, with or

without Hanoi and ourselves being present, sooner or later working out some kind of an agreement which only the Vietnamese could work out. It's very hard to figure what kind of an agreement is satisfactory to both Saigon and the NLF. There are certain aspects of the NLF which I think we should bear in mind, although there's no doubt, as we've said many times, that the whole uprising of the V C was stimulated, organized, trained, financed, supplied, directed from Hanoi; these NLF people are Southerners and there is a difference of point of view between Southerners and Hanoi, just as there is in the Soviet Union between the Ukrainians and Moscow, and certain other parts of Russia.

I think they want to remain independent for a certain period of years before they join—there have been varying statements from five or 10 to 15 years. And I think there are certain things the Southerners can do among themselves which Hanoi will go along with. But the NLF, I don't think, wants to be taken over by Hanoi until the government of South Vietnam is on an equal basis with them.

So I thought, frankly, there is a fundamental basis on which the Southerners can get together if they are willing to do so. On the other hand I have felt that it is absolutely essential for the United States and North Vietnam to come to an agreement. We have got to remember that Hanoi didn't keep the Laos agreement for a single day. They didn't tell this to me, but they contended to some of the Americans that saw them and reported to me that they were forced to sign that agreement, which they didn't like, by the larger powers, presumably Russia and China. They made the naive expression, the statement, 'We always keep agreements that we make ourselves." Well, what is obvious in dealing with all the communists is they only keep the agreements that are in their interest to do so. Therefore, I think we've got to come to an agreement between the United States and Hanoi, with Moscow's help, for a long term relationship.

I'm encouraged that this can be done because at several times the negotiators in Paris in our private talks asked about what kind of relationship they could have. They want to be independent of Peking and of Moscow, and they want some relationship with us. They

look upon American technology as the best in the world. They showed fascination in the miracle rice, as an example. They wanted to be independent of China and the supply of their food. They are inclined to believe this miracle rice, plus the techniques of using it, will do so. So I think there's a chance that we can have some sort of relationship which will last for a period of years which will make them live—I said very bluntly that the North Vietnamese would have to learn to live with their neighbors in peace or there will be no peace in Southeast Asia. They never answered that. But it's not going to be easy.

So far President Nixon has lost the momentum which, under President Johnson, we had in Paris. I think they were quite prepared to discuss the mutual de-escalation of the violence and some real progress could have been made if the Saigon government had appeared on November 6.

Q: The press reported last summer in 1968 a reduced level of violence. Was there a time that you and Mr. Vance thought we might have—

HARRIMAN: Yes, that's on the record. We made great public and private statements to the Hanoi representatives about their shelling of the cities and actually I found, in two cases, by appealing to world opinion we got Hanoi to reverse actions they were taking.

The first was in regard to the prisoners. I was asked by the President to watch the prisoner of war situation, which I did from May 1967. He wanted someone to give attention to the prisoners of war and so I did. But the North Vietnamese were then talking about trials of our prisoners as war criminals. We did a lot. We started a campaign in every country; we asked every embassy, sent out directives, and a major drive was put on. The North Vietnamese abandoned that, because they were held up as misusing prisoners. They, of course, never would permit, which we tried every way we could, to get representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit the prisoners. But they did end those trials.

The next was in connection with this bombing of the cities. We did put on a major drive to get people to recognize the barbarism of hitting, shelling, cities—I mean civilian population in the cities—even to the point where U Thant, you remember, came out with a statement. That offended them very much, to have U Thant come out against—

Q: On our side.

HARRIMAN: On our side—it was a unique experience. So they stopped it. I think they stopped about the middle of June. I think actually the last time that one or two shells dropped in Saigon was June 18. So for two months there was very little action.

Now they are quite blunt on this in our private talks. They said, “Whenever we do anything which is of an offensive nature, you say that these actions on our part are not conducive to progress in our Paris talks for peace.” which is almost verbatim of what I used to say. “But then just as soon as we stop them, your military in Saigon boast that the war is over, we've got them licked!” Actually, I think this is correct. I think that's an unfortunate aspect of some of the statements that come out of—it's quite natural for military men to make statements which they think to be true.

No doubt after an offensive, they have to regroup, and have to resupply. It's a very long and tedious journey to get stuff from Hanoi down through the jungles into the hands of the enemy forces. But in that summer, Vance and I both thought this lull had a political connotation as well.The same was true the end of October or early November. They disengaged in the northern two provinces. They had 25 regiments in the northern two provinces, some of the toughest fighting was going on there. They took out 22 of the 25 regiments. Eleven of them went as far north as the 20th parallel, nearly 200 miles. When the orders were given for General Abrams to put all-out pressure on the enemy, he took the First Air Cavalry Division out of that area, because the fighting had been so reduced, down to the Third Corps. Our military say they had to do it—in Saigon.

After analyzing all the information we had the military in Paris agreed with us—we were in full agreement—there was a political connotation as well as a military in the actions they were taking at that time. So I have a belief—Cy Vance and I both believe, and nobody will get us to change that opinion—that this was a military action which they took in reply to the President's action of stopping the bombing. We could have made progress if the Saigon government had joined the talks in Paris at that time.

Now the information we had as to the fact of the matter in the Saigon discussions were stated publicly by Mr. Clifford in his November 12 press conference. Everything he said confirmed what our impressions were, and of course he had some information about which we were not familiar. I think he said that they had stayed up all night discussing it, and he went to bed to have some sleep before listening to the President's speech announcing that he had stopped the bombing. That was October 28, and the word came that Saigon wouldn't agree. This was a great shock to him. It was a great shock to us in Paris. We had no indication at that time that President Thieu hadn't fully agreed with every step the President was taking. So it's a very serious regret that they didn't move at that time. What their motives were it's hard to tell, but I'm satisfied that someone was sending information to them, “don't do anything before election.” They wanted Nixon to win. They thought he would be tougher. I'm sure that President Nixon had nothing to do with it, but I'm sure certain people did send them that information. And then everything that Vice President Ky did in Paris and Lam did later on when they finally agreed to talk, when we had these weeks and weeks of discussions about procedural questions. They wanted to hold up talks until President Nixon came in. They didn't want to have any substantive talks while President Johnson was in office—because they thought that President Nixon would be tougher or more inclined to go along with them. In fact I believe President Ky did his best to break the talks up. He would have liked to see them wiped off the slate before President Nixon took over.

Q: Did you and Mr. Vance recommend that the United States cut our military activity back during that period?

HARRIMAN: We had some discussions about it when we were back here and I told the Secretary of State that we felt, both of us, that it would be well to do so. But I don't think we put anything on the record. We didn't want to put things on the record which might be at variance with the President's position. We did recommend in the summer, which is on the record, that we should take advantage of the lull—you see the President in his March 31 speech said that “if the other side will take some reciprocal action, I will stop all the bombing,” or something to that effect. We thought this lull in military action was sufficient to take that step. The President didn't believe so and didn't take action at that time. Them I'm satisfied that in October, myself, that the Thieu government didn't—one of the reasons they didn't go along was because they were advised by their friends, including Madam Chennault as well as the Ambassador here, that if we did have peace, Humphrey would be elected. Whether that would have happened or not I of course can't say, but South Vietnam was told that they had better not take that chance. I'm quite sure that President Nixon had nothing to do with it, but some friends passed that word out.

Well, was there anything else?

Q: I was going to say, you have just a few minutes on the end of this tape; if there is anything you'd like to add, don't let me limit you.

HARRIMAN: No, I was naturally tremendously gratified—Vance and I both were, devoted to the President—that we were able to be to some extent instrumental in getting what I have called publicly the train on the tracks, the peace train on the tracks with it's full head of steam up. And on January 18 we finally came to agreement on all procedural questions, but President Nixon has done nothing for five months since then. The steam has gone out. The whole Situation has toughened up. He's lost a tremendous opportunity, and I wouldn't be telling the truth if I wasn't extremely upset. President Nixon has spent this time, as far

as I can find out, doing nothing except discuss with Thieu the relationship between our two countries. Vance stayed in Paris for 30 days. Lodge was not permitted to talk. He stayed there principally to turnover to Lodge the relationship we established. I'm not suggesting we had any particular friendly relations, but we got to know each other to a point where we knew when they were telling the truth and they had more confidence in us.

Actually I don't think the President permitted Lodge to have private talks with the Hanoi delegation for two months. That lost the momentum which President Johnson had made possible and dissipated a great service which President Johnson did for our country and to an incoming President in having these negotiations in a position where they could be carried on. What will happen from now on, I don't want to predict, but I am resentful, extremely resentful, of the fact that President Nixon took four months, until May the 14th, before he announced his policies. As far as I can make out, there wasn't anything he said on May 14 which President Johnson had not previously said. I tried to do the best I could publicly, and said it was a constructive speech, and pointed out certain aspects that were constructive. I've been publicly appealing to the President to carry on private discussions for an agreement in reduction in the violence. I think if we carried on under President Johnson's leadership we could have done that, and what the political settlement would have been, I can't tell. But it was Vance's and my belief that we should cut the violence down, and we did not believe that any progress could be made politically as long as both sides were trying to spar for an improved position militarily.

Q: Do you feel like President Johnson was prepared to rescind the orders to put all pressures on?

HARRIMAN: I'm personally am sure he would have if we could have shown there would be mutual reduction of violence. He felt that until we got the four parties together that full pressure should be kept on them. But if we had come forward with a mutual reduction of violence, I'm quite satisfied that he would have agreed to that. They told us in private talks that we would make no progress as long as we were trying to improve our petition. As

soon as we started the talks we should have accepted the status quo on the ground and gone to a peaceful settlement. This attempt to have a slightly better military position is not conducive to any progress, as far as I'm concerned. President Nixon came into the office, having promised the American people he had a plan for peace. And when he made his first speech on Vietnam four months after he became President, he said, “I have been very diligent in looking at every aspect of the situation in Vietnam, and now I've come to the following conclusions.” And he made a statement which reaffirmed practically everything that President Johnson said.

Q: Concluded that “my predecessor was right!”

HARRIMAN: Yes. If we had been allowed to be attacking the President—which is something about the American system that differs from the British. As soon as a man becomes Prime Minister he's subject to attack by the opposition. Here, we're suppose to give them a period of time-

Q: A 100 days or something.

HARRIMAN: Well, a 100 days, but now Senator Mansfield has given him 6 months which will be another month. But if I had been in the position to state publicly what I felt privately, it's that he deceived the American people into thinking he had a plan, and he boasts about the fact that he's been diligent for four months while American boys were being killed at an increasing rate, and then reiterates the President's [Johnson] position. I don't think there was a thing he said in the May 14th speech which hadn't previously been stated by President Johnson. So I'm frankly very resentful of it. And I do believe that if President Johnson had continued as President we would be in much better shape in regard to negotiations now than we are. I can't predict the future.

Today Mr. Vance, who felt so deeply about it has endorsed the Clark Kerr group, who are out for a negotiated settlement. Their first provision is to declare a cease-fire—a mutual cease-fire. I've stated publicly we ought to negotiate a reduction of violence leading to

the cease-fire. And I'm satisfied we're not going to make any progress in the political settlement until we undertake to reduce the fighting.

End of interview